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ABSTRACT

This document presents a review of the teacher hiring practices of the Department of Defense Dependents Schools. These schools, located overseas, educate minor dependents of military and civilian employees. Information is included on the hiring process for the overseas schools as well as the number of teachers employed, the source of appointment, and the number of students. (JD)

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United States General Accounting Office

GAO

Report to the Chairman, Subcommittee on Investigations, Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, House of Representatives

June 1989

FEDERAL PERSONNEL

Defense Department's Hiring of Teachers for Overseas Schools

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Washington, D.C. 20548

General Government Division

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June 14, 1989

The Honorable William D. Ford
Chairman, Subcommittee on
Investigations
Committee on Post Office
and Civil Service
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Chairman:

In June 1988, you requested that we review the teacher hiring practices of the Department of Defense (DOD) Dependents Schools. These schools, located overseas, educate minor dependents of military and civilian employees.[1] After briefing the Subcommittee on our work, we agreed to provide you information on the hiring process for the overseas schools as well as the number of teachers employed, the source of appointment, and the number of students.

Results in Brief

DOD has statutory authority to establish its own personnel hiring policies for teachers. Using this authority, DOD established a hiring policy that gives preference (1) to teachers residing overseas over teachers residing in the United States and (2) among teachers residing overseas, to dependents of military personnel and federal civil servants stationed overseas.

The policy also provides temporary appointments for some teachers residing overseas. DOD officials said that temporary appointments of overseas hires are made to provide flexibility in staffing due to fluctuations in troop levels, student populations, and teacher requirements.

DOD has incomplete teacher hiring data for the past 5 school years. Although the data provided was limited, it appears that DOD is hiring more teachers from overseas. DOD officials said that generally about two-thirds of its teachers are hired overseas with the remaining one-third hired from the United States. DOD is currently developing a computerized information system for tracking the number of teachers hired, whether the teachers are hired overseas or stateside, and whether they are dependents of military or civilian personnel.

[1]The DOD Dependents Schools are responsible for educating dependents of military and DOD civilian personnel. Dependents of other federal employees may attend the schools for a fee on a space-available basis.

Background

DOD is responsible for providing education, from preschool through grade 12, for dependents of military and DOD civilian personnel stationed overseas. DOD also educates dependents of other federal employees stationed overseas for a fee on a space-available basis. The DOD schools served approximately 152,000 students in about 270 schools located in 19 countries during the 1987/1988 school year. The system is divided into five regions that the headquarters office supervises: Panama, the Pacific, the Atlantic, Germany, and the Mediterranean.

Between 1946 and 1976, the various branches of the military separately operated overseas schools for DOD military and civilian dependents. In 1976, the dependents schools were consolidated into a single entity called the Department of Defense Dependents Schools. This organization includes the headquarters office (Office of Dependents Schools) and the five regional offices. In operating the overseas schools, DOD seeks to ensure that the education available to dependents of military and civilian personnel overseas is of "high quality and . . . comparable to the better school systems in the United States."

Civil service positions in the executive branch are generally in the competitive service unless the positions have been specifically excepted by law, the President of the United States, or the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). OPM has excepted teaching positions in the DOD schools overseas from the competitive service since 1959. As excepted employees, these overseas teachers are appointed under Schedule A (5 CFR 213.3106). Since the DOD overseas teaching positions are excepted service appointments, civil service regulations that apply solely to competitive service employees do not apply to the overseas teachers.

Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

The Subcommittee specifically wanted us to (1) describe the hiring process DOD uses for overseas schools, including the legal basis for the hiring preference given to dependents of military and civilian personnel assigned overseas; and (2) identify, using available data, the numbers of students in the overseas schools, the total number of teachers, and the numbers of teachers hired overseas (temporary and permanent) as well as those hired (permanent appointments) in the United States for schools overseas. The statistical data were to be used to evaluate agency officials' rationale for using temporary appointments for some teachers residing overseas and to determine whether the hiring preferences established were resulting in more teachers being hired from overseas than from the United States.

To accomplish these objectives, we interviewed DOD officials. We also reviewed DOD's policies and procedures for hiring teachers residing overseas as well as pamphlets sent to prospective teachers located in the United States. We researched the pertinent laws and the DOD directive governing how the DOD schools are to be operated. This was done to determine the legal basis for DOD giving hiring preference to dependents of military and civilian personnel assigned overseas.

We also reviewed statistical data from the Office of Dependents Schools to determine if more overseas than stateside teachers were hired. We did not obtain information on the number of applications received from overseas versus stateside teachers, and thus we did not determine if preference is being given to the overseas teachers. Determining preference by comparing applications received from both sources and hires made was outside of the scope of this assignment, as was visiting individual schools to see how the preference is being applied. Instead, we asked for the total number of teachers already employed and the number of teachers hired from overseas and from the United States. In addition, we asked DOD to identify how many of the teachers hired overseas were (1) dependents of military and civilian personnel and (2) hired on a temporary basis. Finally, we asked for the total student enrollment in the overseas schools. To identify the current trend in the hiring practices, we requested the data for the 5 most recently completed school years, 1983/1984 through 1987/1988.

The data supplied by the headquarters office were limited as to school year or overseas region or both. We did not verify this information because it was incomplete. For the same reason, we could not draw any conclusions from the statistics received. We did our work from May 1988 through March 1989, primarily at the headquarters office in Alexandria, Virginia, and in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

Hiring Processes for Overseas Versus U.S. Teachers

DOD relies on two primary sources in hiring teachers for its overseas locations: teachers already located overseas and teachers residing in the United States. DOD has a directive in effect that since 1973 has provided a hiring preference for teachers who are dependents of military and DOD civilian personnel overseas when recruiting from teachers applying who are already located overseas. The definition of dependents was expanded in 1981 to include dependents of all federal employees stationed overseas. In addition, according to the directive, the school system will recruit from teachers already located overseas before hiring

candidates located in the United States. Before any preference is considered, however, all teachers must meet the basic requirements concerning experience and education.

The hiring process is somewhat different for teachers located overseas versus those residing in the United States.

- Applicants living overseas contact the local civilian personnel office, while applicants located in the United States apply through the headquarters office.
- The principals of the schools directly select overseas applicants to teach at their schools. In contrast, applicants located in the United States apply for teaching positions overseas and the headquarters office ultimately decides where the teachers will be assigned when hired.
- Overseas, the local civilian personnel offices review and rate the applications submitted by the teachers located overseas. For the U.S. applicants, the headquarters office reviews and rates the candidates.

According to headquarters officials, teachers available overseas are considered at each stage of the staffing process. The deadline for the initial determination of the number of teachers to be hired for the upcoming school year is January 1. School principals at this time consider teachers residing locally as well as teachers already working for DOD who desire transfers to different schools. After teachers available overseas and those desiring transfers are considered, the principals then determine in the following March how many teachers need to be hired from the United States. In making this determination, principals again check the supply of teachers available locally because new candidates may have arrived since the initial survey was done in January. When requesting that teachers from the United States be hired, principals must state that qualified local candidates (as well as transfers) are not available.

While teachers recruited overseas can be hired on either a temporary or a permanent basis, teachers hired from within the United States are given permanent appointments. Permanent appointments are given to U.S. teachers so that they can qualify for relocation and other entitlements. According to officials of the headquarters office, temporary appointments for overseas hires are made to provide flexibility in staffing needed due to fluctuations in troop levels, student populations, and teacher requirements. Teachers recruited overseas with temporary appointments can be converted to permanent status at the end of the school year; however, this is not an automatic process. According to the

personnel director, the need for that teacher is one of the considerations in converting appointments from temporary to permanent.

The Legal Basis for Dependents Preference

The 1959 Act, "Defense Department Overseas Teachers Pay and Personnel Practices Act," Public Law 86-91 (73 Stat. 213), contains DOD's statutory authority to establish personnel policies for its teachers. Section 4 of the act provides in part that

"[T]he Secretary of Defense shall prescribe and issue regulations to carry out the purposes of this Act. Such regulations shall govern—

(1) the establishment of teaching positions; . . .

(5) the appointment of teachers;

(6) the conditions of employment of teachers. . . ."

As provided for in Public Law 86-91, the Secretary of Defense issued DOD Directive 1400.13, which establishes DOD's policy on the filling of teaching positions in the schools. The August 1973 update of the directive for the first time gave preference for teaching positions to qualified dependents of DOD personnel assigned overseas over other local candidates and U.S. applicants. This preference was continued in the current directive issued in July 1976. The definition of dependents was later expanded in 1981 to include dependents of all federal employees stationed overseas.

Statistical Data Provided by the DOD Dependents Schools Are Incomplete

We could not determine either the total number of teachers or the source of their appointments (overseas versus United States) on the basis of the data available from DOD. The statistical data we received (see app. I) were incomplete for all five regions for the 5 school years for which we requested data. Complete data were available for only two regions for 1 school year, 1987/1988. Consequently, sufficient data were not available to evaluate headquarters officials' rationale for appointing teachers hired overseas to temporary positions.

On the basis of the available 1987/1988 data for the two regions, it appears that DOD hires more teachers residing overseas than in the United States. Since we did not obtain the numbers of applications

received from either teachers overseas or in the United States, we cannot determine whether overseas teachers were given a hiring preference. DOD officials said, however, that generally about two-thirds of its teachers are hired overseas, with the remaining one-third hired from the United States. It also appears from the data DOD provided that most of the teachers hired overseas were dependents of military and civilian personnel.

The data DOD provided for the Panama and Pacific regions for the 1987/1988 school year, which we did not verify, show that more teachers were hired from overseas than from the United States. For that school year, the DOD schools hired 36 of 68 new teachers for the Panama region from overseas. The data also shows that 32 of the 36 teachers hired overseas were dependents of military and civilian personnel. For the Pacific region, 393 of the 539 new hires for the 1987/1988 school year were from overseas. Dependents accounted for 387 of these 393 teachers hired.

At present, DOD does not routinely collect and aggregate hiring data for its overseas schools. Instead, individual civilian personnel offices maintain data on teachers hired overseas. Headquarters officials did say that computer software is being developed that will track the number of teachers hired, the source of the teachers hired (overseas or the United States), and the number of hires who are dependents of military and civilian personnel. This software is being tested in one region and should be ready for use by all five regions by September 1989, the start of the 1989/1990 school year.

Agency Comments

DOD officials generally agreed with the facts as presented in the report. They gave us some additional information that has been incorporated into the report.

As arranged with the Subcommittee, we plan no further distribution of this report until 5 days from the date of issuance unless you publicly announce its contents earlier. At that time, we will send copies to the Secretary of Defense and to others upon request. If you have any questions, please call me at 275-5074. Other major contributors to this report are listed in appendix II.

Sincerely yours,

Bernard L. Ungar

Bernard L. Ungar
Director, Federal Human
Resource Management Issues

Hiring and Enrollment Data

Table I.1: DOD Dependents School Data on Student Enrollment and Teacher Hiring (School Year 1987/1988)

	Region				
	Panama	**Pacific**	**Atlantic**	**Germany**	**Med.**
Total students	7,314	28,085	15,997	88,260	13,417
Total teachers	424	1,583	1,093	[a]	910
U.S. new hires	32	146	65	305	[a]
Overseas new hires	36	393	153	[a]	[a]
Dependents hired as temporary	31	260	[a]	[a]	[a]
Nondependents hired as temporary	4	5	[a]	[a]	[a]
Dependents hired as permanent	1	127	[a]	[a]	[a]
Nondependents hired as permanent	0	1	[a]	[a]	[a]

[a]Not available.

Table I.2: DOD Dependents School Data on Student Enrollment and Teacher Hiring (School Year 1986/1987)

	Region				
	Panama	**Pacific[a]**	**Atlantic**	**Germany**	**Med.**
Total students	7,483	27,290	15,860	87,395	13,577
Total teachers	443	1,346	1,062	[b]	[b]
U.S. new hires	22	69	49	319	[b]
Overseas new hires	53	211	56	[b]	[b]
Dependents hired as temporary	50	160	[b]	[b]	[b]
Nondependents hired as temporary	3	2	[b]	[b]	[b]
Dependents hired as permanent	0	49	[b]	[b]	[b]
Nondependents hired as permanent	0	0	[b]	[b]	[b]

[a]Complete data for the Pacific region were unavailable. The figure for total teachers does not include teachers in Korea. The other figures (excluding total students, which is a complete figure) also omit Korea as well as Okinawa.

[b]Not available.

Table I.3: DOD Dependents School Data on Student Enrollment and Teacher Hiring (School Year 1985/1986)

	Region				
	Panama	Pacific[a]	Atlantic	Germany	Med.
Total students	7,332	26,550	15,950	86,062	13,878
Total teachers	433	1,302	1,050	[b]	[b]
U.S. hires	20	45	85	[b]	[b]
Overseas new hires	60	[b]	153	[b]	[b]
Dependents hired as temporary	53	[b]	[b]	[b]	[b]
Nondependents hired as temporary	7	[b]	[b]	[b]	[b]
Dependents hired as permanent	0	[b]	[b]	[b]	[b]
Nondependents hired as permanent	0	[b]	[b]	[b]	[b]

[a]Complete data for the Pacific region were unavailable. The figure for total teachers does not include teachers in Korea. The new hires figure for teachers from the United States does not include Korea, Okinawa, or the Philippines.

[b]Not available.

Table I.4: DOD Dependents School Data on Student Enrollment and Teacher Hiring (School Year 1984/1985)

	Region				
	Panama	Pacific[a]	Atlantic	Germany	Med.
Total students	7,691	25,887	15,691	85,164	14,355
Total teachers	452	1,269	1,014	[b]	[b]
U.S. new hires	24	47	57	464	[b]
Overseas new hires	34	[b]	132	[b]	[b]
Dependents hired as temporary	25	[b]	[b]	[b]	[b]
Nondependents hired as temporary	9	[b]	[b]	[b]	[b]
Dependents hired as permanent	0	[b]	[b]	[b]	[b]
Nondependents hired as permanent	0	[b]	[b]	[b]	[b]

[a]Complete data for the Pacific region were unavailable. The figure for the total number of teachers does not include Korea. The figure shown for new hires from the United States does not include Korea, Okinawa, or the Philippines.

[b]Not available.

Table I.5: DOD Dependents School Data on Student Enrollment and Teacher Hiring (School Year 1983/1984)

	Region				
	Panama	Pacific[a]	Atlantic	Germany	Med.
Total students	8,075	24,830	14,754	81,918	14,475
Total teachers	448	1,080	966	[b]	[b]
U.S. new hires	17	27	70	[b]	[b]
Overseas new hires	47	[b]	127	[b]	[b]
Dependents hired as temporary	35	[b]	[b]	[b]	[b]
Nondependents hired as temporary	12	[b]	[b]	[b]	[b]
Dependents hired as permanent	0	[b]	[b]	[b]	[b]
Nondependents hired as permanent	0	[b]	[b]	[b]	[b]

[a]Complete data for the Pacific region were unavailable. The figure for the total number of teachers does not include Korea. The figure shown for the new hires from the United States does not include Korea, Okinawa, or the Philippines.

[b]Not available.

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